

HOW TO... Copy files faster

Have you ever struggled with Windows' file-copying functions? Simon Edwards shows you how to simplify the process of copying files with Teracopy

Copying or moving files in Windows should be a simple matter of dragging and dropping them from one folder to another. However, problems often occur and the way that Windows handles these can leave something to be desired. For example, copy a file to a folder that already contains a file of the same name and you'll experience a conflict. Windows XP deals with this situation with an error message that reads, "This folder already contains a file named..." and asks if you want to replace the existing file with the new one. It shows the modification date of each file, which helps you make the decision and prevents accidents such as overwriting a newer version of the same document. You can opt to overwrite the file or cancel the operation. Consequently, mass copying in XP can be a slow, painful and often error-prone process.

While Windows Vista also has a reputation for being slow, it is more helpful than XP. It offers three options in the same situation. You can choose to replace the old file, cancel the operation or copy the file but rename it at the same time. You can also tick the 'Do this for all conflicts' option, which is handy if you are copying or moving lots of files in one go and don't want to sit at your desk clicking the correct button repeatedly.

However, there is a solution that makes file operations faster and less error-prone for both Windows XP and Vista. Teracopy is a free utility that gives you more control when copying and moving files; it even claims to speed up some data transfers by adjusting memory buffers. You can also pause and resume file transfers, a

feature that's particularly handy if you need to use your computer for an urgent task and don't want to restart a large file-copying job later.

Teracopy also provides a flexible system for dealing with duplicate filenames. The Overwrite option is particularly useful. As well as a standard overwrite, the program can also overwrite all duplicates or it can be instructed to overwrite files that are older than the files being copied automatically. This provides a simple way to synchronise a folder so it has the most recent versions of the files.

1 Download Teracopy from www.codesector.com and install it. Run the program from the Start menu and the main interface will appear. Even if you click the Close button, Teracopy will still run the in background, waiting for you to copy or move files either by dragging them with the mouse or using the Windows clipboard to cut or copy and paste them.

2 To ensure that Teracopy integrates with Windows so you don't need to run it every time you transfer files, you need to make it the default copy handler. Click the Menu button and choose Options. The Shell Integration option should be ticked; if it's not, check the tick box. Click OK.

3 If you have a number of files in different locations that you want to move or copy to a new folder, drag each one on to the list displayed by Teracopy's main interface. The advantage of using this file-handling method is

that you can queue files to be transferred, possibly at a time when you aren't going to be using the computer.

4 To copy the files, click the Copy To button and either choose a destination from the folders displayed in the pop-up list or click Browse, which allows you to choose a different folder.

If you want to copy or move files from one folder to another, rather than from multiple folders, and you want the operation to start immediately, you can drag files or use the clipboard as normal. Teracopy will automatically handle the file transfer.

5 As the files are transferred, the list will display the specific progress of each file. This information is much more detailed than the basic progress bar provided by Windows. You also have the option to manage file transfers after they have started. In the picture below we've paused the transfer of an enormous video file ('Enormous Video File.avi') so we can prioritise copying another file. Do this by pressing the Pause button. Pressing Skip instructs the program to jump to the next transfer in the list.

6 When a file is copied or moved to a folder that already contains a similarly named file, Teracopy asks you to Overwrite, Rename or Skip the file. If you are only copying one file, choose the option that you want. However, if you are copying lots of files and want to make the same decision for each, click the All button next to the Overwrite, Rename or Skip option. **CS**

